

**Ladd's Creek Ecological Management Unit  
Compartments 207, 208, 209**

**Decision Notice  
and  
Finding of No Significant Impact  
for  
Timber Harvest and Associated Activities**

**Logan and Yell Counties, Arkansas**

**Responsible Agency:**  
US Forest Service  
Ouachita National Forest  
Poteau-Cold Springs Ranger District

**Responsible Official:**  
Acting District Ranger Edwin Spence  
PO Box 417  
Booneville, AR 72927

**For Further Information Contact:**  
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Booneville, AR 72927  
479-675-4743 ext 107

**April 1, 2020**

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**DR 4300.003 USDA Equal Opportunity Public Notification Policy (June 2, 2015)**

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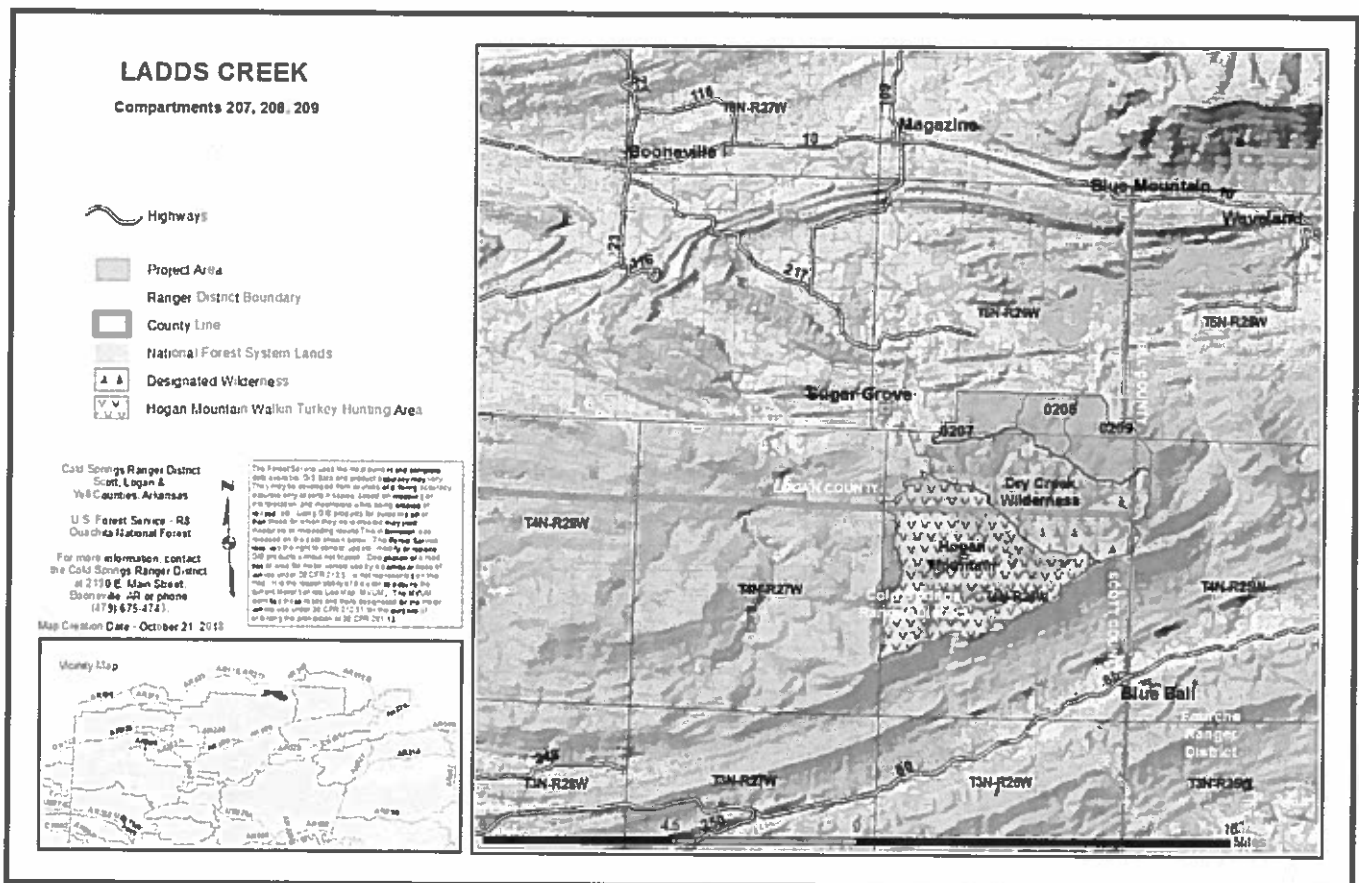
## Proposed Action

Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared by the interdisciplinary team (IDT) to address the environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Action, Alternative I (No Action), and Alternative II (Proposed Action without herbicide use) and Alternative III (No Road Construction). The EA is available for public review in the Cold Springs Ranger District Office in Booneville, Arkansas, and at [www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55282](http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55282).

Ladd's Creek is approximately 8 miles southeast of Booneville, Arkansas, just east of the small community of Sugar Grove, Arkansas. Blue Mountain Lake and the Community of Magazine are north of this project area. The project area is in the northern portion of the Ouachita National Forest. The private land is in Compartment 207 in the northwest portion of the Ladd's Creek project area. Dry Creek Wilderness Area is adjacent to the south.

See Location map. Legal descriptions are:

o	Logan County	Township 5 North	Range 26 West	Sections 26,32, 33, 34,35, 36
o	Logan County	Township 4 North	Range 26 West	Sections 1, 2, 3 4, 5
o	Yell County	Township 5 North	Range 25 West	Section 31
o	Yell County	Township 4 North	Range 25 West	Section 6



Management actions are needed to move the project area towards the design criteria for Management Area 14 (Ouachita Mountains, Habitat Diversity Emphasis), Management Area 9 (Water and Riparian Communities), Management Area 17 (Semi-Primitive Areas) in the Revised Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service, 2005a). Detailed descriptions of these management areas as of 03/17/2016 are located on the website: [http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/ouachita/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fsm9\\_039823](http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/ouachita/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fsm9_039823). Ladd's Creek project area contains 3,847 acres of national forest lands and 99 acres of private. These forested acres include 3,299 acres suitable for timber production.

Summary of existing National Forest lands and private ownership in the *Ladd's* analysis area. These are *approximate* acres based on Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

Land Designation — National Forest Management Areas	C-207	C-208	C-209	Total
MA 14 Suitable for timber production (Land Class 500-timber production emphasis)	258	384	3	645
MA 14 Suitable (Land Class 511-contains key area for wildlife, fish, rare plants)	63	0	0	63
MA 14 Suitable (Land Class 630-recreation emphasis)	0	0	133	133
MA 14 Suitable (Land Class 650-wildlife emphasis)	90	81	0	171
MA 14 Suitable Total	411	465	136	1,012
MA 14 Unsuitable Total	621	307	120	1,048
TOTAL MANAGEMENT AREA 14	1,032	772	256	2,060
MA 17 Suitable (Land Class 500-timber production emphasis)	0	0	12	12
MA 17 Suitable (Land Class 600-special/timber production secondary to other resources)	0	0	119	119
MA 17 Suitable (Land Class 630-recreation emphasis)	0	0	368	368
MA 17 Suitable Total	0	0	499	499
MA 17 Unsuitable Total	0	218	1,070	1,288
TOTAL MANAGEMENT AREA 17	0	218	1,569	1,787
TOTAL NATIONAL FOREST LANDS	1,032	990	1,825	3,847
Private acres within boundary	99	0	0	99
Total Acres within project area (private and NF lands)				3,946

#### PROPOSED ACTIONS

PROPOSED ACTION SUMMARY OF TREATMENTS PRESCRIBED	C-207	C-208	C-209	TOTAL
<b>HARVEST TREATMENTS</b>				
Commercial Thinning - 70 BA Pine and 10 BA Hardwood (acres)	115	178	426	719
Modified Seed Tree (acres) for Regeneration	64	0	0	64
Clearcut Loblolly (acres) for Regeneration	0	37	0	37
Subtotal Regen Harvests				101
TOTAL HARVEST TREATMENTS				820
<b>SILVICULTURE TREATMENTS</b>				
Reforestation of New Regen Sites (acres)	64	37	0	101
Timber Stand Improvements of Other Regen (acres)	0	77	0	77
TOTAL				178
<b>FUELS TREATMENT</b>				
Fireline Construction (miles)				11.69
Multi-purpose Burning 3-5-year intervals (acres)	1032	990	1825	3,847
<b>WILDLIFE TREATMENTS</b>				
WSI - option to use hand tools, herbicides or mechanical (acres)	115	178	426	719
Nest Box (#)	22	16	22	60
Pond Construction (#)	6	3	10	19
Pond Reconstruction (#)	3	2	1	6
Temporary Wildlife openings (logging decks -- approximate #)				44
<b>TRANSPORTATION ***</b>				
Reconstruction (miles)				5.23
Temporary Roads (miles)				5.32
Obliteration (miles)				1.05
<b>OTHER TREATMENTS</b>				
Firewood Areas				yes
Landline Maintenance (miles)				6.0
Feral Hog Control (yes/no)				yes

\*\*\*The August 29, 2019 Project Announcement Letter listed the road reconstruction miles as 8.13 miles and the temporary road miles as 5.18. Also, the Proposed Action included 0.11 of road decommissioning and 43 logging decks. Since that time, it was determined that less road would be needed to meet the objectives of the project. Changes include reducing road reconstruction mileage on Roads 133 and 3050A and reducing the extent to which roads will be reconstructed on roads 133, 3050, and 3050A, dropping Roads 51 and 3 (West of the intersection with 133), slightly increasing road reconstruction mileage on Road 3 (east of the intersection with 133), and slightly increasing temporary road mileage. This will also reduce the economic impacts on the project. This reconfiguration added a logging deck. Further field inspection determined that the road that was thought to be decommissioned by nature was simply blocked by debris.

Nest boxes would be installed at each pond location and at each regeneration location; two per site.

Hardwoods may be harvested in stands identified for treatment, where available, leaving a minimum hardwood component of 10 percent of the residual stand or 10 basal area per acre.

Permits would be offered to the public for collection of rocks by private individuals within road construction and reconstruction corridors. That is, rocks can be collected within areas of disturbance associated with road construction and reconstruction. Firewood and shale pit permits may be issued.

Firelines would be constructed around perimeters of all natural and artificial regeneration areas (i.e. shelterwood, seedtree, or existing regeneration areas). The mechanically constructed fireline would be bladed down to mineral soil and approximately 8 feet wide. Bladed lines would be water barred as necessary on slopes to limit soil movement. Firelines would normally be installed within 50 feet either side of stand boundaries. The purpose of a fireline is for "control" if a prescribed fire is applied to the stands for site preparation and/or to exclude fire during years of stand development.

**Regeneration Stands** would have reforestation and timber stand improvement activities (Site Preparation, Release, Mechanical Scarification, and TSI (multiple times if necessary). If activities are not successful, rip and plant with shortleaf pine; hand tool release, herbicide, and pre-commercial thinning may be utilized.) These activities may be repeated as necessary to obtain adequate shortleaf pine regeneration.

**Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCW) Treatments** – If a new RCW cavity tree or a cavity tree cluster is discovered in the process of implementing a timber harvest decision in management areas other than Management Area 22 (i.e. MA 14, 17, 21), the RCW Species Recovery Plan and Ouachita National Forest Revised Forest Plan standards would apply and management of that cavity tree or cavity tree cluster area would begin immediately. In the event a new RCW cavity tree is found or started within this project area, the immediate area, including streamside management zones (Revised Forest Plan standard 22.05 pp. 120), that surround the tree (10 acres) would be identified as an active cluster and all activities associated with enhancing and protecting the cluster would begin. Other activities would include use of cavity restrictors, snake and squirrel excluder devices, artificial cavities, single-bird augmentations, multiple-bird group-initiations, brush hogging in cavity tree clusters, removal of southern flying squirrels, population/nest monitoring, cavity maintenance and southern pine beetle (SPB) and Ips control efforts. In active, inactive, and recruitment clusters, retain no more than 10 square feet of basal area per acre in overstory hardwoods. Remove all hardwoods within 50 feet of cavity trees. (Revised Forest Plan pg 122; 22.17).

### Matrix of Needed Road Work Ladd's Creek Mountain EMU

Road Name	Segment	Type of Work	Description
133	N/A	Reconstruct 0.41 mile	Apply Gravel to Road Surface and add and replace pipe as needed, for 0.41 miles from M.P. 0.05 to M.P. 0.35 and from M.P. 0.78 to M.P. 0.89. This will remain an open road year-round after harvest.
3050	N/A	Reconstruct 2.2 miles	Add gravel to surfacing and Replace pipe as needed, for 2.2 miles from START to END. This will remain a seasonally open road after harvest.
3050A	N/A	Reconstruct 1.2 miles	Apply Gravel to road surface and replace pipe as needed for 1.25 miles from START to M.P. 1.25. This will remain a seasonally open road after harvest.
877	N/A	Reconstruct 0.96 mile	Apply Gravel to road surface and replace pipe as needed for 0.96 miles from START to END. This will remain a Closed road year-round after harvest.
3	N/A	Reconstruct 0.41 mile	Replace pipe as needed for 0.28 mile from M.P. 1.39 to M.P. 1.57, from M.P. 1.63 to M.P. 1.68, and from M.P. 1.97 to M.P. 2.02. Widen Switchbacks for 0.13 mile from M.P. 4.4 to M.P. 4.46 and M.P. 4.52 to M.P. 4.59. This will remain an open road year-round after harvest.
			<b>Total Reconstruction – 5.23 miles</b>
3027	NA	Obliteration	Obliterate 0.40 miles
LG38	N/A	Obliteration	Obliterate 0.65 Miles
			<b>Total Road Obliteration – 1.05 miles</b>
Temp Roads			5.32 miles – Many of these are old roads that would be opened. A few would be new. All temporary roads would be closed after harvest.
Various		Decks	Approximately 44 decks to be seeded as temporary wildlife openings.

C-207 STANDS	LAND CLASS	MGT AREA	ACRES	FUELS	HARVEST			SILVICULTURE		WILDLIFE				
					Comm Thin 70 BA pine 10 BA Hwd	Regeneration		Reforestation of New Regen Site Prep, Natural or Artificial Reforestation, Release, PCT	TSI of Other Regens Site Prep, Natural or Artificial Reforestation, Release, PCT	WSI Hand tool, mechanical or herbicide	Nest Box	Ponds		
						Seed Tree	Clearcut Loblolly					Rehab	New	
1	500	14	63	63						63				
2	500	14	17	17		17		17				2		
3	821	14	374	374								2		1
4	500	14	29	29										
5	511	14	47	47		47		47				4	1	1
6	820	14	43	43								2		1
7	821	14	45	45								2		1
8	500	14	50	50										
9	500	14	16	16	16					16		2		1
10	821	14	43	43								2	1	
11	500	14	12	12										
12	500	14	36	36	36					36		4	2	
13	511	14	16	16										
14	650	14	68	68										
15	500	14	8	8								2		1
16	828	14	3	3										
17	828	14	14	14										
18	828	14	1	1										
19	828	14	73	73										
20	828	14	7	7										
21	500	14	27	27										
22	828	14	1	1										
23	828	14	0	0										
24	650	14	22	22										
25	828	14	1	1										
26	828	14	4	4										
27	828	14	10	10										
28	828	14	2	2										
901	Private		99											
TOTAL			1131	1032	115	64	0	64	0	115	22	3	6	

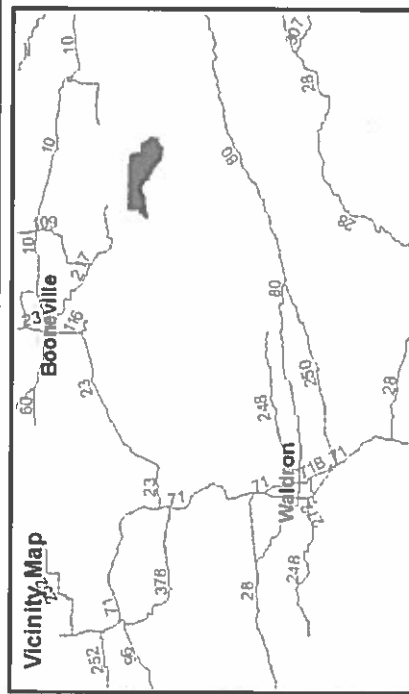
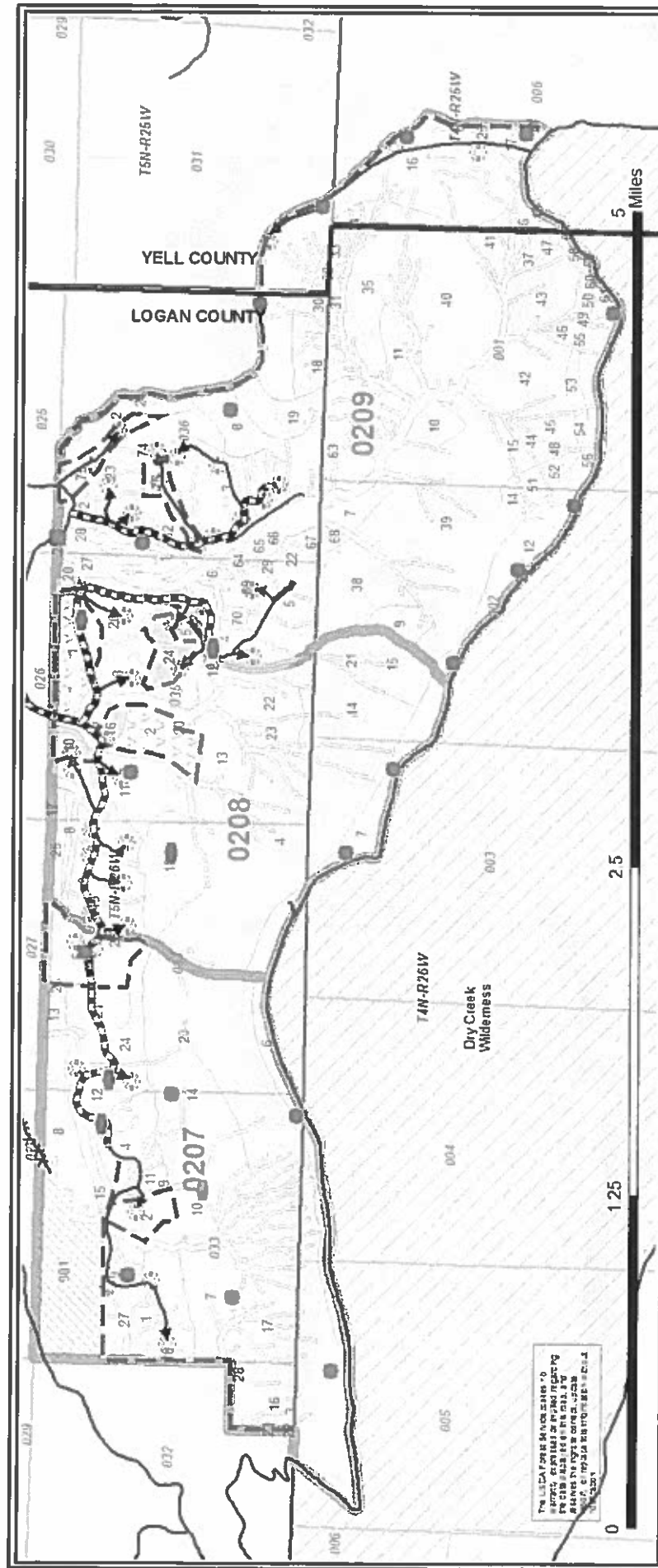
C-208 STANDS	LAND CLASS	MGT AREA	ACRES	FUELS	HARVEST			SILVICULTURE			WILDLIFE				
					Comm Thin 70 BA pine 10 BA Hwd	Regeneration Seed Tree	Clearcut Loblolly	Reforestation of New Regen Site Prep, Natural or Artificial Reforestation, Release, PCT	TSl of Other Regens Site Prep, Natural or Artificial Reforestation, Release, PCT	WSI Hand tool, mechanical or herbicide	Nest Box	Ponds			
1	500	14	43	43						43			2	1	
2	500	14	34	34						34 (older regen)					
3	500	14	21	21	21						21				
4	821	14	178	178											
4	821	17	58	58											
5	500	14	34	34											
6	500	14	5	5											
7	820	14	19	19											
7	820	17	48	48								4	2		2
8	500	14	5	5	5						5				
9	500	14	62	62	62						62				
10	500	14	10	10		10		10				2			
11	500	14	64	64	64						64	2	1		1
12	650	14	16	16	16						16				
13	650	14	29	29											
14	821	14	12	12											
14	821	17	56	56											
15	821	14	0	0											
15	821	17	46	46											
16	500	14	7	7		7		7				2			
17	828	14	0	0											
18	500	14	54	54								2	1		
19	828	14	19	19											
20	828	14	79	79											
20	828	17	6	6											
21	828	14	0	0											
21	828	17	4	4											
22	650	14	24	24											
23	650	14	12	12											
24	500	14	20	20		20		20				2			
25	500	14	15	15											
26	500	14	10	10	10			10			10				

TOTAL			990	990	178	0	37		37		77		178		16	2	3
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C-209 STANDS	LAND CLASS	MGT AREA	ACRES	FUELS	HARVEST			SILVICULTURE			WILDLIFE				
					RX BURN 3-5 Year Rotation	Comm Thin 70 BA pine 10 BA Hwd	Regeneration Seed Tree	Clearcut Loblolly	Reforestation of New Regen Site Prep, Natural or Artificial Reforestation, Release, PCT	TSI of Other Regens Site Prep, Natural or Artificial Reforestation, Release, PCT	WSI Hand tool, mechanical or herbicide	Nest Box	Ponds		
													Rehab	New	
1	821	14	18	18											
1	821	17	1	1											
2	630	17	27	27											
3	630	14	2	2	2						2				
3	630	17	67	67	67						67				
4	630	14	48	48	48						48	2	1		
5	630	14	45	45											
5	630	17	1	1											
6	821	14	3	3											
7	821	14	0	0											
7	821	17	16	16											
8	821	17	29	29								2		1	
9	827	17	16	16											
10	827	17	16	16											
11	827	17	21	21											
12	600	17	41	41								4		2	
13	600	17	4	4											
14	821	17	7	7											
15	821	17	8	8											
16	630	17	182	182		182					182	6		3	
17	600	17	15	15		15					15	2		1	
18	821	17	29	29											
19	821	17	38	38											
20	821	14	3	3											
21	828	14	4	4											
22	828	14	73	73											
22	828	17	181	181											
23	828	14	1	1											
23	828	17	9	9											
24	828	17	5	5											
25	828	17	2	2											

C-209 STANDS	LAND CLASS	MGT AREA	ACRES	FUELS	HARVEST			SILVICULTURE			WILDLIFE			
					Comm Thin 70 BA pine 10 BA Hwd	Regeneration		Reforestation of New Regen	TSl of Other Regens Site Prep, Natural or Artificial Reforestation, Release, PCT	WSI Hand tool, mechanical or herbicide	Nest Box	Ponds		
						Seed Tree	Clearcut Loblolly							
26	828	17	1	1										
27	821	14	5	5										
28	821	14	3	3										
29	630	14	2	2										
30	821	17	9	9										
31	821	17	3	3										
32	821	17	1	1										
33	821	17	6	6										
34	821	17	8	8										
35	821	17	59	59										
36	821	17	7	7										
37	821	17	6	6										
38	821	14	1	1										
38	821	17	55	55										
39	821	17	195	195										
40	821	17	111	111										
41	821	17	15	15										
42	821	17	58	58										
43	821	17	37	37										
44	821	17	6	6										
45	821	17	12	12										
46	821	17	6	6										
47	821	17	1	1										
48	821	17	1	1										
49	821	17	2	2										
50	821	17	1	1										
51	821	17	7	7										
52	821	17	6	6										
53	821	17	7	7										
54	821	17	4	4										
55	821	17	1	1										

C-209 STANDS	LAND CLASS	MG T AREA	ACRES	FUELS	HARVEST			SILVICULTURE			WILDLIFE			
					Regeneration		Comm Thin 70 BA pine 10 BA Hwd	Reforestation of New Regen		TSI of Other Regens Site Prep, Natural or Artificial Reforestation, Release, PCT	WSI Hand tool, mechanical or herbicide	Nest Box	Ponds	
					Seed Tree	Clearcut Loblolly		Site Prep, Natural or Artificial Reforestation, Release, PCT	Rehab				New	
56	600	17	50	50							4			2
57	600	17	1	1										
58	600	17	4	4										
59	600	17	1	1										
60	600	17	1	1										
61	600	17	2	2										
62	500	14	0	0										
62	500	17	12	12										
63	821	14	1	1										
63	821	17	66	66										
64	821	14	4	4										
65	821	14	3	3										
66	821	14	1	1										
67	630	14	5	5										
67	630	17	2	2										
68	630	17	2	2										
69	630	14	15	15			15			15				
70	500	14	3	3			3			3				
71	828	17	1	1										
72	630	14	9	9										
72	630	17	0	0										
74	630	14	6	6			6			6				
74	630	17	53	53			53			53	2			1
75	630	14	1	1			1			1				
75	630	17	18	18			18			18				
76	630	14	0	0			0			0.47				
76	630	17	16	16			16			16				
TOTAL			1825	1825	426	0	0	0	0	426	22	1	10	



## LADDS CREEK

- Clearcut Loblolly (Site Prep, Regen, TSI) with 2 next boxes
- Modified Seed Tree (Site Prep, Regen, TSI) with 2 nestboxes
- Thin Pine to 70 BA and Hwd to 10 BA with WSI
- Timber Stand Improvement (TSI)
- Burn all stands 3-5 year rotation
- Private
- Proposed Firelines 11.69 miles

- Pond Construction
- Pond Rehabilitation
- Decks
- Slabs
- Temp Roads
- Reconstruction
- Roads
- Obliterated
- DBN
- Sugar Maple Growth Improvements

## Compartment 207, 208, 209

Map Finalized Date - December 10, 2019

Cold Springs Ranger District  
Scott, Logan &  
Yell Counties, Arkansas  
U.S. Forest Service - R8  
Ouachita National Forest

For more information, contact  
the Cold Springs Ranger District  
at 2190 E. Main Street  
Booneville, AR or phone  
(479) 675-4743

## Decision

Based on the analysis documented in the EA, it is my decision to implement the Proposed Action identified above for the Ladd's Creek Ecosystem Management Unit. My decision is based on a review of the record that shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgement of incomplete or unavailable information. See Relevant Planning Documents (EA Chapter 1 p. 16), Technical Requirements and Forest Plan Mitigations (EA Chapter 2 p. 18), and Literature Cited (EA Chapter 6 p. 89).

## Reasons for the Decision

1. The Proposed Action was chosen over Alternative I (No Action) because the No Action Alternative would not meet the identified purpose and need for this project as stated in the EA beginning on page 8.
2. The Proposed Action was chosen over Alternative II (Proposed Action without herbicide use) because it allows the use of herbicides as an alternative treatment for silviculture and wildlife if other methods don't create the desired results.

Specifically, the Proposed Action would best meet the following project objectives (EA, p. 5-9, 14):

- TO MANAGE FOR OUACHITA MOUNTAINS-HABITAT DIVERSITY IN MANAGEMENT AREA 14
  - ❖ To maintain the primary community types (Ouachita Pine-Oak Forest, Ouachita Pine-Oak Woodland, and Ouachita Dry-Mesic Oak Forest)
  - ❖ To create a healthy forest condition
  - ❖ To reduce competing vegetation for nutrients, water, and sun
  - ❖ To increase growth rate and quality of desired trees by reducing competition for nutrients and water among species
- TO MANAGE FOR SEMI-PRIMITIVE AREAS IN MANAGEMENT AREA 17
- TO ENSURE REGENERATION STANDS ARE RESTOCKED
  - ❖ To site prep a bed for seed fall after the regeneration harvests
  - ❖ To create a suitable seedbed in regeneration sites after initial prescribed burning
  - ❖ To ensure survival of desired trees by releasing suppressed trees from competing tree species
- TO IMPROVE WILDLIFE HABITAT
  - ❖ To create suitable habitat for the ABB
  - ❖ To create early seral stage habitat
  - ❖ To create temporary wildlife openings
  - ❖ To provide new growth for wildlife to eat
  - ❖ To create water sources for wildlife.
  - ❖ To reduce midstory and allow development of grasses and forbs on the forest floor
  - ❖ To move toward the open road density objective
  - ❖ To stop or slow the infestation of invasive and non-native species
- TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO PROJECT AREA AND PROVIDE SAFE ROAD SYSTEM.
  - ❖ To repair or maintain road surfaces, ditch erosion, and repair or replace rusted-out pipes
  - ❖ To provide short-term access to harvest units
  - ❖ To reduce the impacts to streams and get rid of roads not needed in the future
- TO REDUCE FUEL LOADING.
  - ❖ To prevent natural resources from being damaged
  - ❖ To protect personal property from wildfires
  - ❖ To reduce wildfire intensity to provide a safer environment for fire fighters
- TO BE GOOD NEIGHBORS
  - ❖ To supply firewood areas and rock permits to the local community.
  - ❖ To ensure landlines are maintained.

## Role of the Interdisciplinary Team and Public Involvement

Information sharing was exchanged during solicitation periods, but comments specific to the proposal or analysis were not received.

The Ladd's Creek Project was first listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) on 01/01/19. The project was published to the Forest's website at this time at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55282>.

A Project Announcement Letter (PAL) or “scoping letter” was mailed to interested publics on August 29, 2019, requesting input on the proposed actions from September 1-30, 2019. One response was received on 8/29/19.

- Information Sharing During Solicitation Period: Allie Cumnock, Environmental Health Specialist, Source Water Protection, Arkansas Department of Health Engineering Section (requested shapefiles for this project). Annetta Cox, GIS Specialist, forwarded the shapefiles to her on 9/04/19.

The 30-day comment period legal for this project ran in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette on February 23, 2020.

- Information Sharing During Solicitation Period: On February 26, 2020, Eric Mills, Archeologist/Section 106 Manager/Division of Arkansas Heritage with the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program commented that the staff of the Arkansas State Historic Preservation Officer look forward to consultation on the Ladd's Creek Project in accordance with 36 CFR Part 800 and that an AHPP Tracking Number was assigned to the project.

Outside of the solicitation period (9/1-30/2019), the following comments were received:

- Dick Artley, Email requesting to be alerted to when scoping started for this project and when the scoping package is posted online, February 8, 2019. (Mr. Artley is on all the NEPA mailing lists for all NEPA projects.)
- Teresa Lee, P.E., Chief, Technical Support Engineering Section, Arkansas Department of Health – No Comments on the submittal but notes that portions of the project intersect with the source water assessment area for Danville Waterworks. ADH requests that all silvicultural BMPs be followed to minimize any potential negative effects on water quality associated with the project, October 2, 2019. (BMPs are covered on pages 9, 44-46, and 89).

#### Issues Identified

*Issue #1: Herbicide use is considered an “issue to be analyzed in depth” because of the intensity of interest that will require the formulation of a “non-herbicide” alternative. Herbicide use is proposed to achieve the desired conditions to establish native forest cover where needed. This would be to remove nonnative species such as mimosa or privet.*

*Issue #2: Road construction is considered an “issue to be analyzed in depth” because of the intensity of interest that will require the formulation of a “no road construction” alternative. Road construction is proposed to access forest stands proposed for harvest.*

#### Alternatives Eliminated From Detailed Study

There were no issues or unresolved conflicts to drive the following additional alternative, but the interdisciplinary team considered the following:

##### No Harvest Alternative

In response to comments received during scoping, this alternative was considered by the Interdisciplinary Team, but eliminated from detailed analysis.

The ID Team concluded that a “No Harvest” alternative would not satisfy the purpose and need for improving forest health by reducing stand densities and providing the residual trees with access to greater amounts of soil nutrients and water thus increasing their growth, vigor, and improving their resistance to disease and/or insect attack. It also would not create the early seral habitat that would enhance the forage availability and native herbaceous plant rejuvenation essential for wildlife and bird species.

In addition, the ID Team felt the No Action Alternative adequately addressed the overall effects of a no harvest alternative.

##### No New Road Construction (including temporary roads) Alternative

In response to comments received during scoping, an alternative was considered by the ID Team that would not propose any new construction of roads, including temporary roads, but eliminated from detailed analysis.

The ID Team concluded a proposal with no temporary roads would not allow access into the project area to implement management activities that would satisfy the purpose and need, specifically:

- To have at least 6% and not more than 14% of the suitable land in the 0-10-year age class in Management Area 14 (Revised Forest Plan, pp. 78).
- To have at least 6% and not more than 10% of the suitable land in the 0-10-year age class in Management Area 17 (Revised Forest Plan, pp. 78).
- Manage the project area for native species while limiting nonnative species and off-site species (Revised Forest Plan, pp. 6, 58, 59, 60, 82).
- To reduce midstory and allow development of grasses and forbs at ground level (Revised Forest Plan, OBJ06, pp. 59, WF001, pp. 78).
- To have a healthy forest stand (Revised Forest Plan, pp. 58-60, 80-83).
- To have the understory and midstory more open, & dominated by herbaceous vegetation (Revised Forest Plan, WF001, pp. 78)
- To have healthy, productive stands in these areas (Revised Forest Plan, pp. 58-60, 79-83).
- To increase the vigor and mast producing potential of residual hard mast producing trees through forest management (Revised Forest Plan, OBJ003, pp. 78)

#### Alternatives Considered in Detail

Three alternatives were analyzed in the EA:

1. **Proposed Action** – This alternative is described on pages 23-30 of this document.
2. **Alternative I (No Action)** - Under the No Action Alternative neither the Proposed Action nor any other action alternative would be implemented. (See EA, p. 31). Management activities would be deferred until a later entry. However, ongoing Forest Service approved activities would continue in the project area.
3. **Alternative II (Proposed Action without herbicide use)**- This alternative is the same as the Proposed Action except for herbicides are not proposed treatment of non-native invasive plant species (See EA, p. 31).

#### Forest Plan Mitigations (EA, p. 8)

The Forest-wide Design Criteria for Management Area 14 (Ouachita Mountains, Habitat Diversity Emphasis), Management Area 9 (Water and Riparian Communities), and Management Area 17 (Semi-Primitive Areas) in the Revised Forest Plan (*USDA Forest Service, 2005a*) are incorporated by reference as mitigating measures into the Proposed Action by smart design. Detailed descriptions of these management areas as of 03/17/2016 are located on the website:

[http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/ouachita/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fsm9\\_039823](http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/ouachita/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fsm9_039823)

#### Project Specific Protective Measures (EA, p. 18)

##### Soils

Allow heavy equipment operations on hydric soils, soils with a severe compaction hazard rating, and floodplains with frequent or occasional flooding hazard only during the months of July through November. Operations during December through June are allowed with the use of methods or equipment that do not cause excessive soil compaction. This standard does not apply to areas dedicated to intensive use, including but not restricted to administrative sites, roads, primary skid trails, log decks, campgrounds, and special use areas. (Revised Forest Plan, SW001, p. 74)

Allow heavy equipment operations on soils that have a high compaction hazard rating only during the months of April through November. Operations during December through March are allowed with the use of methods or equipment that do not cause excessive soil compaction. This standard does not apply to areas dedicated to intensive use, including but not restricted to administrative sites, roads, primary skid trails, log decks, campgrounds, and special use areas. (Revised Forest Plan, SW002, p. 74)

These standards apply to operations in the stands displayed in the tables below.

Harvesting Operating Seasons for Compaction			
Moderate-High (High) Rating of Soils Limited April through November Operating Season		Severe Rating of Soils Limited July through November	
COMPARTMENT	STAND	COMPARTMENT	STAND
208	3		
208	24		
208	26		
209	3		
209	4		
209	69		
209	74		
209	76		

Harvesting Operating Seasons for Hydric Soils							
Floodplains with frequent or occasional Flooding Limited July through November Operating Season							
COMPARTMENT	STAND	COMPARTMENT	STAND	COMPARTMENT	STAND	COMPARTMENT	STAND
207	1						
207	2						
207	9						

Soil loss from management actions will not exceed the estimated Forested T-factor for each soil or soil map unit based on the cumulative time period between soil disturbing management actions. (Revised Forest Plan, SW003 (3), p. 74). To meet this standard, in addition to installing water bars and seedling, deep tillage would be required on log decks, as well as temporary roads and primary skid trails with slope grades of 15% or less, in the stands displayed in the table.

Stands Requiring Additional Erosion Control Measures	
Compartment	Stand
None	

#### Herbicide Use

- HU001 – Herbicides will be used only where necessary to achieve the desired condition in the treatment area, and then only when site specific analysis shows no unacceptable negative effects to human or wildlife health or the ecosystem as defined in HU002.
- HU002 – Herbicides will be applied at the lowest rate effective in meeting project objectives and according to guidelines for protecting human and wildlife health. Site-specific risk assessments are required prior to herbicide application and must be calculated using the procedure developed by Syracuse Environmental Research Associates (SERA).
- HU003 – To minimize potential effects of herbicide use, whenever possible, use individual stem treatments and directed spraying.
- HU004 – Herbicides that are not soil-active will be used in preference to soil-active ones when the vegetation management objectives can be met.
- HU006 – Clearly marked buffers will protect streamside zones, private land and public water supplies.
- HU010 – The use of herbicides is prohibited in the immediate vicinity of Proposed, Endangered, or Threatened plants.
- HU011 – Within a 300-foot buffer from any source waters (public water supply), do not apply herbicide treatments unless a site-specific analysis supports use within the designated buffer to prevent more serious environmental damage than is predicted if pesticides are used.
- HU012 – No herbicide mixing, loading, or cleaning areas will occur within a 300-foot buffer of private land, open water, source waters (public water supply), wells, or other sensitive areas.

- HU018 – A certified pesticide applicator will administer all pesticide application contracts and will supervise any Forest Service personnel involved with the application of pesticides on the Forest.

#### **Heritage**

The following measures only apply to cultural resource sites that are unevaluated, eligible for listing, or listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

##### ***HP1: Site Avoidance During Project Implementation***

Avoidance of historic properties (HP) will require the protection from effects resulting from the undertaking. Effects will be avoided by (1) establishing clearly defined site boundaries and buffers around archeological sites where activities that might result in an adverse effect. Buffers will be of sufficient size to ensure that integrity of the characteristics and values which contribute to, or potentially contribute to, the properties' significance will not be affected, and (2) routing proposed new roads, temporary roads, log landings and skid trails away from historic properties;

##### ***HP2: Site Protection During Prescribed Burns***

- ***Firelines.*** Historic properties located along existing non-maintained woods roads used as fire lines will be protected by hand-clearing those sections that cross the sites. Although these roads are generally cleared of combustible debris using a small dozer, those sections crossing archeological sites will be cleared using leaf blowers and/or leaf rakes. There will be neither removal of soil, nor disturbance below the ground surface, during fireline preparation. Historic properties and features located along proposed routes of mechanically constructed firelines, where firelines do not now exist, will be avoided by routing fireline construction around historic properties. Sites that lie along previously constructed dozer lines from past burns where the firelines will be used again as firelines, will be protected during future burns by hand clearing sections of line that cross the site, rather than re-clearing using heavy equipment. Where these activities will take place outside stands not already surveyed, cultural resources surveys and regulatory consultation will be completed prior to project implementation. Protection measures, HP1, HP3, and HP4, will be applied prior to project implementation to protect historic properties.
- ***Burn Unit Interior.*** Combustible elements at historic properties in burn unit interiors will be protected from damage during burns by removing excessive fuels from the feature vicinity and, as necessary, by burning out around the feature prior to igniting the main burn, creating a fuel-free zone. Burn out is accomplished by constructing a set of two hand lines around the feature, approximately 30 to 50 feet apart, and then burning the area between the two lines while the burn is carefully monitored. Combustible features located in a burn unit will also be documented with digital photographs and/or field drawings prior to the burn. Historic properties containing above ground, non-combustible cultural features and exposed artifacts will be protected by removing fuel concentrations dense enough to significantly alter the characteristics of those cultural resources. No additional measures are proposed for any sites in the burn interior that have been previously burned or that do not contain combustible elements or other above ground features and exposed artifacts as proposed prescribed burns will not be sufficiently intense to cause adverse effects to these features.
- ***Post-Burn Monitoring.*** Post-burn monitoring may be conducted at selected sites to assess actual and indirect effects of the burns on the sites against the expected effects. SHPO consultation will be carried out with respect to necessary mitigation for any sites that suffer unexpected damage during the burn or from indirect effects following the burn.

##### ***HP3: Other Protection Measures***

If it is not feasible or desirable to avoid an historic property that may be harmed by a project activity (HP1), then the following steps will be taken: (1) In consultation with the Arkansas SHPO, the site(s) will be evaluated against NRHP significance criteria (36 CFR 60.4) to determine eligibility for the NRHP. The evaluation may require subsurface site testing; (2) In consultation with the Arkansas SHPO, tribes and nations, and with the ACHP if required, mitigation measures will be developed to minimize the adverse effects on the site, so that a finding of No Adverse Effect results; (3) The agreed-upon mitigation measures will be implemented prior to initiation of activities having the potential to affect the site.

##### ***HP4: Discovery of Cultural Resources during Project Implementation***

Although cultural resources surveys were designed to locate all NRHP eligible archeological sites and components, these may go undetected for a variety of reasons. Should unrecorded cultural resources be discovered, activities that may be affecting that resource will halt immediately; the resource will be evaluated by an archaeologist, and consultation will be initiated with the SHPO, tribes and nations, and the ACHP, to determine appropriate actions for protecting the resource and mitigating adverse effects. Project activities at that locale will not resume until the resource is adequately protected and until agreed-

upon mitigation measures are implemented with SHPO approval.

### Scenery

The following technical requirements are informed by the Southern Region's Scenery Treatment Guide (April, 2008) for regeneration harvests.

- Trees should be selectively removed to improve scenery within high use areas, vista points, and along interpretive trails.
- Flowering and other visually attractive trees and understory shrubs should be favored when leaving vegetation.
- During permanent road construction, slash should be removed from view in the immediate foreground to the extent possible. Slash may be aligned parallel to roads at the base of fill slopes to collect silt, but usually only if it provides this function.
- Slash should be burned or lopped to within an average of 2 feet of ground, when visible within 100 feet on either side of Concern Level 1 travel routes. Slash should be treated to within an average of 4 feet of the ground when visible within 100 feet on either side of Concern Level 2 travel routes.
- Root wads and other unnecessary debris should be removed or placed out of sight within 100 feet of key viewing points.
- Stems should be cut to within 12 inches of the ground in the immediate foreground.
- Special road and landing design should be used. When possible, log landings, roads and bladed skid trails should be located out of view to avoid bare mineral soil observation from Concern Level 1 and 2 travel routes.
- The visual impact of roads and constructed fire lines should be blended so that they remain subordinate to the existing landscape character in size, form, line, color, and texture.
- Openings and stand boundaries should be organically shaped. Straight lines and geometric should be avoided. Edges should be shaped and/or feathered where appropriate to avoid a shadowing effect in the cut unit. Openings should be oriented to contours and existing vegetation patterns to blend with existing landscape characteristics, as appropriate.
- Cut and fill slopes should be revegetated to the extent possible. Cut banks should be sloped to accommodate natural revegetation.

### Monitoring

The Revised Forest Plan lists monitoring activities for the Ouachita National Forest. The Forest's monitoring program is designed to evaluate the environmental effects of actions similar to those proposed in this project, and also serves to assess the effectiveness of treatments. In order to ensure that the appropriate design criteria protecting soil stability, water quality, and other resources are followed, trained contract administrators and inspectors would be on-site during the implementation phase of the project. For those activities that include the use of herbicides, surveillance monitoring to ensure that herbicide label instructions are being followed would be conducted as part of the contract administration. Form R8-FS-2100-1, Herbicide Treatment and Evaluation Record, would be used to monitor work involving herbicides. Stream samples would also be taken to monitor for offsite movement.

### **Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

I have determined that the proposed actions are not a major federal action, either individually or cumulatively, and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment based on the EA and from past experience with similar forest management activities. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary. This determination is based upon the following factors:

1. Both beneficial and adverse effects have been considered and this action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment (EA, Chapter 3 Environmental Disclosures).
2. The degree to which public health and safety may be affected is minimal (EA, pp. 79).
3. The project will not affect any unique characteristics of the geographic area (historic or cultural resource, wetlands, and floodplains, etc.). This is based on information gathered through records and site specific field inventories (EA, p.43, and 84).
4. Based on public involvement and the analyses conducted in the EA, the effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial (EA, p. 16 and Chapter 3 Environmental Disclosures).
5. The actions do not involve highly uncertain, unique, or unknown environmental risks to the human environment. All actions described have been conducted before, and district staff members have considerable expertise in carrying out these actions (EA, Chapter 3 Environmental Disclosures).
6. The actions in this decision will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (EA, Chapter 3 Environmental Disclosures).
7. The cumulative effects of the proposed actions have been analyzed with consideration for past and foreseeable future activities on adjacent public and private land, and no significant cumulative effects would result from implementation (EA, p. 31) and Chapter 3 Environmental Disclosures).
8. The actions will not affect any sites listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places nor will they cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historic resources. This is based on site specific cultural resource surveys conducted on the analysis area, preparation of a Cultural Resources Report, and consultation on the proposed project with the Arkansas State Historic Preservation Officer. (EA, pp. 84).
9. The actions are not likely to significantly affect endangered or threatened plant or animal species or critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act (EA, pp. 66 and Biological Evaluation).
10. None of the actions threaten to lead to violation of federal, state, or local laws imposed for the protection of the environment. This will be ensured by carrying out the decision in a way that is consistent with the forest-wide design criteria, management requirements and mitigation measures established in the Revised Forest Plan. For water quality management, State approved Best Management Practices will be used for this project. The project will be monitored to ensure BMPs are implemented. If implementing BMPs on a specific site results in effects significantly higher than anticipated, because of unforeseen site factors or events, appropriate corrective measures will be considered and implemented. This project will fully comply with State approved BMPs and the Clean Water Act (EA, pp. 43).

### **Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations**

I have determined that actions included in this decision are consistent with the Revised Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for the Ouachita National Forest because the selected alternative has been planned and will be implemented in accordance with all applicable design criteria of the Revised Forest Plan (EA, p. 16). The actions described in the selected alternative are typical of those projected for implementation in the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan and for which the environmental effects are disclosed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). This environmental assessment tiers to the FEIS (EA, p. 16).

### **National Forest Management Act (NFMA)**

Under 16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(E), a Responsible Official may authorize site-specific projects and activities on NFS lands to harvest timber only where:

1. Soil, slope, or other watershed conditions will not be irreversibly damaged (EA, p. 38).
2. There is assurance that the lands can be adequately restocked within five years after final regeneration harvest; hand-planting will occur if natural regeneration is inadequate (EA, p. 53).
3. Protection is provided for streams, streambanks, shorelines, lakes, wetlands, and other bodies of water from detrimental changes in water temperatures, blockages of water courses, and deposits of sediment where harvests are likely to seriously and adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat; protection is provided by

adherence to minimum widths of streamside management areas (SMAs), protected areas adjacent to bodies of water and on each side of perennial streams and other streams with defined channels (Revised Forest Plan, pp. 43).

4. The harvesting system to be used is not selected primarily because it will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output of timber. See EA, Purpose & Need, pp. 78.

A Responsible Official may authorize site-specific projects and activities on NFS lands using clearcutting, seed tree cutting, shelterwood cutting, and other cuts designed to regenerate an even-aged stand of timber as a cutting method only where:

1. For clearcutting, it is determined to be the optimum method; for other cutting methods it is determined to be appropriate and meets the objectives and requirements of the applicable land management plan (16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(F)(i)). See EA, Purpose & Need, pp. 12; EA.
2. The interdisciplinary review has been completed and the potential environmental, biological, aesthetic, engineering, and economic impacts on each advertised sale area have been assessed, as well as the consistency of the sale with the multiple use of the general area (16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(F)(ii)). See EA, Chapter 3.
3. Cut blocks, patches, or strips are shaped and blended to the extent practicable with the natural terrain (16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(F)(iii)). The Scenery Treatment Guide-Southern Region National Forests will be followed (EA, p. 82).
4. These cuts are carried out according to the maximum size limits for areas to be cut in one harvest operation as required by 16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(F)(iv)). Cuts are carried out according to the maximum size of regeneration area for even-aged management under Design Criteria FR009 (Revised Forest Plan, p. 53).
5. Timber cuts are carried out in a manner consistent with the protection of soil, watershed, fish, wildlife, recreation, and esthetic resources, and the regeneration of the timber resource (16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(F)(v)). See EA, Chapters 2 & 3.
6. Under 16 U.S.C. 1604 (m) even-aged stands of trees scheduled for regeneration harvest generally have reached culmination of mean annual increment of growth, unless the purpose of the timber cutting is excepted in the land management plan. Regeneration harvests follow Design Criteria FR009, Harvest Age (Revised Forest Plan page 81).

#### OBJECTION OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is not subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218; no comments were received in response to any solicitation.

#### IMPLEMENTATION DATE

As per 36 CFR 218.12, this decision may be signed and implemented immediately.

#### Contact

For further information on this decision, contact Donna Reagan, Cold Springs Ranger District, PO Box 417, Booneville, AR 72927; phone (479) 675-4743 ext. 107; email [donna.reagan@usda.gov](mailto:donna.reagan@usda.gov).

#### Responsible Official

/s/ Edwin Spence  
Acting District Ranger Edwin Spence

4/14/2020  
DATE